

# EMPLOYER ALERT



## Low Levels of Lead: **DANGEROUS**

*We used to think that a blood lead level less than 40 µg/dL would not damage an adult's health. Recent studies have shown harmful effects at much lower levels. Doctors now recommend that adult blood lead levels be kept below 10 µg/dL.*

### Low levels of lead in adults can:

- ▶ Increase blood pressure – may increase the chances of having a heart attack or stroke.
- ▶ Decrease brain function – makes it more difficult to think, learn, and remember.
- ▶ Decrease kidney function – makes it more difficult to get rid of toxic waste products through the urine.
- ▶ Harm the physical and mental development of a baby before it's born.
- ▶ Increase chances of having a miscarriage.

*Health damage from lead can be permanent. It can occur even if workers have no symptoms and may not show up until many years later.*

### If your business uses or disturbs lead, you need to:

- ▶ Provide your employees with a blood lead level test.
- ▶ Take steps to keep lead dust and fume levels low.

### Your business could be using or disturbing lead if you:

- Make or repair radiators
- Make or recycle batteries
- Recycle scrap metal or electronics
- Melt, cast, or grind lead, brass, or bronze
- Make or glaze ceramics
- Operate a shooting range
- Remove or disturb paint or coatings
- Remodel homes and buildings
- Tear down buildings, bridges, or tanks
- Cut, weld, or saw lead-containing metal
- Use solder

**This is not a complete list.** Check the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) or the chemical composition sheet for the products and materials you use.



**CDPH**

**California Department of Public Health  
Occupational Lead Poisoning Prevention Program**

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# Blood Lead Testing



## What is a blood lead level test?

A blood lead level test measures the amount of lead in a person's blood. A blood lead test is the best way to measure a worker's exposure to lead from breathing or accidentally swallowing it. Blood lead test results are reported in micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  or  $\text{mcg}/\text{dL}$ ).

## Who should do blood lead level testing?

You should provide blood lead level testing for your employees if you use or disturb lead or lead-containing products in your business.

**Blood lead testing is the easiest and most cost effective way to know if your employees are exposed to too much lead.**

## What level of lead is safe?

We don't know if there is any safe level of lead. However, some of the harmful effects of lead have been seen at very low levels. Scientists and doctors now recommend that blood lead levels be kept below  $10 \mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ . Pregnant women or women considering pregnancy should not have a blood lead level above  $5 \mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ . People who aren't exposed to lead at work typically have a blood lead level less than  $2 \mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ .

## How can I have my employees tested?

You need to arrange for a medical doctor to order a blood lead level test. You should pay for the test. A blood lead level test usually costs between \$40 and \$100 per test. To find a doctor or clinic to do testing for you go to: [www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/olppp/pages/BLLtesters.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/olppp/pages/BLLtesters.aspx)

## What happens with the results of the tests?

The laboratory sends the results to the doctor who ordered the test. The doctor will share the results with the employee and with you.

## What do I do with the results?

Review the results to see how you're doing at protecting your employees from lead.

- ▶ If everyone is below  $10 \mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ , continue what you're doing and retest in 6 months or sooner.
- ▶ If anyone is above  $10 \mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ , you need to take steps to improve lead safety. See the fact sheet **Lead Safety—Doing It Right** for more information on how to lower lead exposure. Retest in 6 months or sooner.

You may not be able to get everyone's blood lead level below 10 right away. But if you take action, your employees' levels will come down over time.

***Keeping blood lead levels low can be challenging, but staying on top of lead safety will protect your employees and your business.***

### Additional information:

Toll-free to California callers.

- For information about lead safety: (866) 627-1587
- California Relay Service: (800) 735-2929 or 711
- [www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/olppp](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/olppp)

To obtain a copy of this document in an alternate format, please contact: (510) 620-5757.

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